



USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 200 N. High Street, Room 522, Columbus, Ohio 43215 (614) 255-2472

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State Conservationist
Kevin Brown

The 2002 Farm Bill we have been awaiting became a reality on May 13, 2002, when President Bush signed the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act. An 80 percent increase in funding marks the largest gain ever in conservation spending. This

is the greatest opportunity for voluntary conservation efforts on privately owned land that has taken place in my 26-year career with NRCS.

Along with opportunity comes change. The way we provide services and deliver programs to the public will be altered. The traditional Conservation Partnership delivery system provided by Soil and Water Conservation Districts, ODNR-Division of Soil and Water Conservation, and NRCS will not be the only providers of technical assistance. Congress made it clear in the new legislation that third party vendors from the private sector will be given the opportunity to help provide for conservation planning and implementation.

Streamlining of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the addition of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) are the most revolutionary sections of the Conservation Title. These programs will help producers develop conservation plans, implement the plans, and maintain new and existing conservation systems.

This will provide the overall umbrella for keeping conservation on the ground for the long term, which has been missing from our conservation delivery system.

The 2002 Farm Bill provides us the opportunity to put good conservation on the ground. We must take advantage of this opportunity by providing quality service to our customers and help conserve our natural resources.

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2002 Farm Bill Dramatically Increases Conservation Programs

By Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

When the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act became law on May 13, 2002, America initiated its greatest commitment ever, of committing financial and technical resources toward conservation on private lands. This new law, also known as the 2002 Farm Bill, provides America with a dramatic increase over past conservation fund allocations. Spending for conservation over the next six years will increase by 80 percent over past levels. The 2002 Farm Bill provides more than \$17 billion in funding for conservation.

Landowners who voluntarily participate in Farm Bill programs will benefit from conservation technical assistance, cost sharing, incentive payments, and land rental. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the USDA's lead agency for the

establishment and maintenance of conservation on private lands.

NRCS Chief Bruce I. Knight said, "The conservation provisions build upon past conservation gains and respond to the call of farmers and ranchers across the country for additional cost-share resources. The 2002 Farm Bill also ensures greater access to programs by making more farmers and ranchers eligible to participate."

New procedures will cut red tape and save valuable time at the county level. As NRCS administers the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and as the Farm Service Agency administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), each agency can now proceed without formal approval of the other agency, thus reducing duplication of efforts.

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman said, "We are trying to cut the red tape to get the job done and enable producers to

participate in our programs in a timely manner. This kind of teamwork among USDA agencies is particularly critical as we implement the new Farm Bill. We continue to look for ways we can improve our systems to help producers."

"We are trying to cut the red tape to get the job done," said USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman

The streamlining of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and addition of the new Conservation Security Program (CSP) have revolutionized the Conservation Title of the bill. Together, these two programs will enable producers to develop and implement conservation plans for entire resource systems, more easily than ever before.

The Farm Bill Programs:

CSP
EQIP
FPP
RC&D
WHIP
WRP



CSP

The Conservation Security Program is the Farm Bill's largest new program. The CSP establishes three, progressive tier levels of conservation performance, with higher payments for higher tier conservation contracts that include best management practices. The NRCS will determine the performance requirements for each tier level. This new program has entitlement status so it is not subject to a program spending cap. CSP will encourage the development of comprehensive, resource management systems as it rewards good conservation management. Funding is proposed for CSP in 2003. The improved EQIP will link to the CSP.

EQIP

EQIP promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. Producers receive financial and technical assistance to install and implement conservation practices on eligible

agricultural land. Planned conservation practices are adapted to fit local needs and environmental conditions in accordance with the engineering standards of the NRCS. EQIP pays up to 75 percent of the approved conservation practice costs.

In previous years, requests for EQIP assistance have exceeded available funds. In Ohio during 2001, NRCS accepted over 473 applications for \$4.1 million in EQIP funds, which exceeded the \$2.5 million that the State received for the program. In FY 2002 Ohio's 988 applications for \$11.45 million exceeded the state's \$5.4 million applications.

The national program will be funded at \$400 million which is twice the previous amount. Funding will increase until it reaches \$1.3 billion in FY 2007. EQIP priority areas are now eliminated. The basis for application ranking will shift from cost-effectiveness to the severity of the conservation problem.

FPP

The Farmland Protection Program (FPP) is a voluntary Federal program that helps farmers keep their land in agriculture. The program provides matching funds to State, tribal, and local governments and nongovernmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements. The NRCS is designated as the lead agency in implementing this program. FPP is reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill to protect working agricultural land from conversion to nonagricultural uses.

RC&D

The USDA's RC&D program helps people in rural areas plan and carry out activities that increase conservation of natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living in local communities. The RC&D program is successful because it provides people with the means to solve their own natural resource problems and promote sustainable use of natural resources at the local level. With the selection of the Heart of Ohio RC&D area in January 2002, the State became completely covered by its nine RC&D areas. The 2002 Farm Bill has permanently reauthorized the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program.

WHIP

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats. These habitats support wildlife populations of national, State, tribal, and local significance. Most efforts in Ohio have concentrated on improving upland wildlife habitat, such as native prairie, but there is an increasing emphasis on creating wetland habitat and improving aquatic areas.

NRCS continues to provide assistance to landowners after completion of habitat development activities. This assistance may be in the form of monitoring habitat practices, reviewing management plans, or providing biologic or engineering advice to achieve the best results for targeted species. Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process.

Since WHIP began in 1998, nearly 11,000 participants have enrolled more than 1.6 million acres into the program nationally. During WHIP's first three years, Ohio received \$565,198 to improve wildlife habitat on over 130 sites covering approximately 1,700 acres. In FY 2002, Ohio received \$255,000 and the national program received \$15 million. By FY 2007, national funding will increase to \$85 million annually.

WRP

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for the restoration, enhancement, and protection of wetlands. The goal of WRP is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program.

WRP offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife habitat enhancement practices at a minimal cost. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, or restoration cost-share agreements. WRP is offered on a continuous sign-up basis and is available nationwide.

Nationally, there are 1,074,000 acres enrolled in the program. National acreage will increase to 2,275,000 acres, with an annual enrollment cap of 250,000 acres. In Ohio, over 15,700 acres have been enhanced with WRP projects on 257 sites since 1995.

Bruce Knight is New NRCS Chief

By Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

Bruce Knight assumed his duties as the new Chief of the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service on May 6, 2002. Knight will direct the activities of the 11,000-person agency with a budget of \$1.1 billion. He will provide leadership in 50 states, Pacific Basin, and Caribbean Area to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and the environment.

Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman said, "Bruce Knight brings to USDA a great deal of knowledge and first-hand experience in conservation and agriculture policy from having served as a congressional staff member, a public policy leader for a national trade association, and as a working farmer and rancher. I know that he will use that knowledge and experience in administering important conservation programs for USDA."

"The Farm Bill creates enormous opportunities for us to provide leadership in helping people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment," said Bruce Knight.

Knight recently served for seven years as Vice President of Public Policy for the National Corn Grower's Association's (NCGA) Washington, D.C. office. The NCGA is a producer-directed trade association that represents U.S. corn growers. He previously served on the staff of Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-KS, and worked on development of the Conservation Title of the 1996 Farm Bill. Knight worked for the National Association of Wheat Growers. He also worked as a legislative assistant to Representative Fred Grandy, Iowa, and Senator James Abdnor, South Dakota. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in General Agriculture, Animal Science, and Economics at South Dakota State University.

Knight said, "It is truly an honor to join the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency with a proud history of providing assistance to America's farmers and ranchers. I am confident that during my tenure as Chief, we will build on that heritage."

Knight has been a farmer and a rancher since 1976 on a diversified grain and cattle operation. There he utilized no-till and rotational grazing and best management practices. Knight is a native of Gann Valley, South Dakota. He succeeds Pearlie Reed, who served as NRCS Chief since March 1, 1998.



NRCS Chief Bruce Knight

USDA photo

Knight spoke about the 2002 Farm Bill and about the focus of NRCS. He said, "The Farm Bill creates enormous opportunities for us to provide leadership in helping people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. I know that, working together, we will turn these opportunities into accomplishments."

Here are things I feel we should focus on in the coming months: First, maintaining our tradition of excellent service throughout the agency; Second, maintaining and building on the partnerships we have developed over the years; Third, implementing the provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill; and Fourth, exploring the issues raised for discussion in the Department's recent Food and Agricultural Policy document." Knight added, "I look forward to meeting and talking with many of you all over the country during the coming months. I have a world of respect for conservation districts. I plan to listen, to hear solutions, and resolutions to conservation policy."

Customer Service Toolkit Implementation

By Sean Browning, NRCS

Customer Service Toolkit (CST) is the latest NRCS conservation planning software. CST uses MicroSoft Office Suite and Arc View 3.2 GIS to assist conservationists with the development of conservation plans, contracts, and maps. Implementation of CST began in October 2000 with the formation of Ohio's Toolkit Implementation Team lead by NRCS Resource Conservationist Deba Mohler. The team is pleased to report that as of June 2002 over 60 percent of Ohio NRCS field offices have CST installed. CST implementation will continue over the next several months until 100 percent deployment is achieved.

The team is using an incremental deployment method with this latest conservation planning technology. This approach provides a flexible and orderly release of related software and data. Using this

method, the team is able to conduct localized, small-scale training sessions for new users. The approach also provides new users with a support network of trained CST users from other counties.

The implementation and use of desktop GIS and CST for conservation planning marks an exciting time in NRCS history. CST provides NRCS customers with high

quality conservation planning products they expect and deserve.

The Ohio Toolkit Implementation Team is committed to assisting and supporting all Ohio NRCS field offices with their mission of conservation. If you have questions concerning CST implementation and training, please contact Deba Mohler at (614) 255-2465.



Sean Browning provides training at a recent Customer Service Toolkit training session

Urban Storm Water Wetland Filters Clark County

By Kim Farr, NRCS

The Lower Mad River Watershed Protection Project (OEPA-319 Grant) has teamed up with the Clark County engineers, Clark SWCD, NRCS, and the Clark County commissioners to fund and implement a new best man-

agement practice for treating and controlling urban storm water runoff. An Urban Storm Water Wetland is currently under construction in conjunction with drainage improvements being made along Upper Valley Pike and State Route 41 in central Clark County.



The storm water wetland has been designed to trap sediments, slow confluence of a 75-acre drainage area, and treat this runoff before being discharged into the Mad River. The wetland will filter a combination of runoff from residential, commercial, and agricultural areas. It will include 0.6 acres of surface water, with a total of 0.9 acres of filtering capacity. The wetland will be used as an educational and demonstration site to show the function and importance of wetlands for a healthier Lower Mad River Watershed.

On Geographic Information Systems

By Bob Parkinson, Jon Gerken, and Jim Stafford, NRCS

No doubt about it, geography matters. As National Geographic Society Chairman Gilbert M. Grosvenor frequently noted, “Without geography, we’re nowhere.” With geography, we can locate any point, line, or area feature - like a livestock barn, an access road, or a recently urbanized area. In fact, most of the information that we develop or use as an agency has some geographic basis, whether it’s a soil survey, a tillage transect, a Wetlands Reserve Program easement, or a CNMP. Making the most of all this information to help our customers get conservation on the land is where Geographic Information Systems (GIS) comes in.

GIS is used to develop, manage, analyze, and display data, and it is a very powerful tool for conservationists, planners, scientists, and decision makers. It consists of four main parts: computer hardware, GIS software, data, and trained people. Within a GIS, data can be created, stored, managed, analyzed, and displayed or printed as maps. GIS data can be both imported from, and exported to, Computer Aided Design (CAD) software.

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At the national level, NRCS is active on the Federal Geographic Data Committee, cooperating in Federal interagency efforts for: geospatial data standards and acquisition; software and hardware evaluation and procurement for USDA; software development; data base development and dissemination; and training.

The NRCS National Cartographic Center has evolved into the National Cartographic and Geospatial Center (NCGC). This center supports aerial photography acquisition, remote sensing, lithographic map production from GIS data, and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technological and geospatial data development which includes climate data, SSURGO soils, National Resource Inventory (NRI), and hydrologic units.

At the State level, Ohio NRCS has been actively working with the GIS user-community, including ODNR and others, since the 1980s to help implement desktop GIS by promoting local, State, and Federal cooperation, coordination, and implementation. NRCS has been an active participant of the Ohio Geographically Referenced Information Program and has met with numerous county officials interested in establishing a local GIS over the years. The Ohio NRCS GIS Committee, chaired initially by Doug Deardorff and currently by Sean Browning, includes members from cooperating agencies such as ODNR-DSWC and SWCDs.

Efforts to implement GIS in NRCS area offices and field offices in the

early 1990s involved installing public domain GRASS-GIS software that ran on Unix workstations. NRCS’s movement to commercial, “off the shelf” GIS software began in the late 1990s. In October 2001, the effort culminated with USDA’s department-wide 5-year agreement with Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) to use ArcView and ArcInfo in USDA Service Centers and cooperating SWCD offices.

This agreement is part of the effort to make GIS widely available to agency decision makers. It coincides with the recent acquisition of Common Computing Environment (CCE) computers and with the deployment of Customer Service Toolkit (CST) for conservation planning. Customer Service Toolkit (CST) runs on ArcView and is installed in over 65 counties, under the guidance of Deba Mohler. Sean Browning has provided invaluable statewide training and follow-up support. Current plans include more installations of ArcView and its extensions as well as ArcInfo based upon this agreement with ESRI.

Ohio’s statewide coverage of digital orthophotography is the result of cooperative Federal and State funding. The Federal government supplied 80% of the cost — USDA (NRCS & FSA) supplied 50%; USGS provided 30%; and the State of Ohio paid 20% of the cost of the Digital Orthophoto Quarter-Quads (DOQQs). NRCS-NCGC has made this data easier to use by creating compressed orthophoto (MrSID) mosaics for all Ohio counties. Seventy-five

counties have already received their mosaic, and the remaining mosaics will be forwarded as they are received.

The cooperative effort of Federal and State agencies working with hydrologic units (HUs), has produced a high detail, digital watershed layer. The digital layer has added two levels of detail beyond what was previously available through the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 8-digit subbasin level. USGS drainage delineations were digitized by ODNR, and NRCS took the raw digitized data and aggregated areas to provide consistent acreage sizes that met multiagency guidelines.

The conservation partnership is at the threshold of implementing a significant digital SSURGO data program. Digitizing soils data is progressing steadily through the NRCS, SSURGO initiative, funding by counties, and recent appropriations by the Ohio legislature to speed the effort. A total of 51

counties have their soil maps digitized or are currently underway. The most recent starts in the process are Athens, Champaign, Jackson, Lawrence, Monroe, Noble, and Scioto Counties.

New technologies are being implemented to increase the efficiency of the soils digitizing program. NRCS is entering into agreement with The Ohio State University to establish an automated map compilation unit. Paul Jenny, Soil Scientist in Newark; Gretta Luedeke, a cartographer who came to us from Wisconsin; and Toyia Yates, a recently hired cartographic technician will be working on this project with OSU faculty and staff. ODNR is contracting with a private consulting company who is using a similar process.

Resource soil scientists have been working hard to get NASIS data edited which is needed to provide tabular data for the Field Office Technical Guide, Customer Service Toolkit, and SSURGO.

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NASIS editing has been completed, or is in progress, for 25 counties. Five data sets have been edited by project office staff who work mainly on soil survey updates. A similar number of counties will be scheduled for editing during the next fiscal year. Rich Gehring, Soil Scientist in Columbus, is providing support for this project. Additional assistance will come Jeff Glanville, Soil Database Manager, who recently joined the Columbus staff.

NRCS contact information: CST Coordinator, Deba Mohler; CST Software Applications, Sean Browning; Hydrologic Units, Jim Stafford; SSURGO, Jon Gerken; and digital orthophotos, GPS, NRI, GIS, Bob Parkinson.

Ohio NRCS has provided 17 Rockwell Precise Lightweight Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Receivers (PLGRs), and 8 Garmin III+ and 6 Garmin GPSMap 76 units, capable of differential GPS, for use statewide. GPS data can be incorporated into GIS. These GPS units are actively being used for siting and mapping point, line, and area features including wellheads, sample sites, log jams, livestock operations, access roads, easements, and areas of recent mining or development. In 1999, GPS was used to navigate to over 100 NRI sample points to collect data on soil erosion as part of the 1999 NRI Special Study.

Ohio NRCS conducts an on-going, broad based National Resource Inventory (NRI) which is used to assess the status, condition, and trends of our soil, water, and related resources. The NRI is based on the study of 7,000 Primary Sample Units (PSUs), constituting 1.1 million acres in Ohio, with 21,000 associated sample points. Each year in Ohio, about 1,700 PSUs and 5,100 sample points are studied by field office staff and NRCS remote sensing specialists in East Lansing, Michigan. Newly collected data will be used to keep NRI statistics as current as possible. Findings for the most recent NRI data will be posted on the Ohio NRCS web page: <http://www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov/nri/index.html> or at the national NRCS web page: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/>

Rehabilitation of Flood Control Dams in Ohio

By Art Brate

The United States Congress authorized and funded the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop a pilot program to rehabilitate small watershed dams built under the original pilot watershed and P.L. 566 watershed programs. Ohio was selected along with Wisconsin, Mississippi, and New Mexico to develop the program.

Ohio currently has 78 dams constructed under these programs. Many of the structures were built in the 1950s and 1960s to solve flooding problems along with including multipurpose uses such as erosion control, water supply, and recreation. A rapid survey indicates that as many as 46 of these dams are in need of repairs and/or upgrades due to a change in the dam hazard class and/or component deterioration. It is estimated that the construction cost will exceed \$10 million.

This rehabilitation program requires that a replanning process take place for each watershed. Most of these structures were built before the current environmental policy, historical preservation, and endangered species acts became law. Therefore, an up-to-date environmental assessment was necessary for each site. Public scoping meetings were held in each watershed to address the

needs of the dam and local concerns and interests. A list of alternatives was developed and their impacts evaluated.

Many of the dams have been reclassified as high hazard due to downstream development. The high hazard criteria requires that the dam safety pass higher fre-



215 acre Wolf Run Lake in Wolf Run State Park provides flood control, water supply, and recreation to Belle Valley and Noble County.

NRCS photo

quency rainfall events without overtopping. Since many of the structures are 40-50 years old, the 50-year sediment pool is nearly full and deterioration of concrete spillways or rusted out corrugated metal pipe has occurred.

The following sponsors are cooperating with NRCS under this program: Chippewa Subdistrict of the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District – Medina County, Rushcreek Conservancy District – Fairfield County, Hunter's Run Conservancy District – Fairfield County, Wolf Run State Park – Noble County, and Hocking Col-

lege – Athens County. Sponsors are required to provide 35 percent of the total project cost and obtain the necessary landrights and permits.

Planning is now complete on seven dams. Supplemental watershed plans and environmental assessments have been written and notices posted in the Federal Register.

Construction activities that are underway and/or will be completed in the next 12 months include: raising the top of several dams as much as 2.5 feet, widening emergency spillways up to an additional 120 feet, replacing a reinforced concrete riser and impact basin, replacing a corrugated metal riser and pipe, and removing sediment from several pool areas. The Rushcreek Conservancy District is relocating two houses below a dam and obtaining flowage easements on the flood inundation area below the dam.

The rehabilitation of these dams is a very necessary and important process in maintaining the infrastructure in these communities. Repairing and/or upgrading the dams ensures that they meet the current dam safety criteria and extends their service life another 50-100 years. NRCS has been able to provide valuable technical and financial assistance to these sponsors and communities.

NRCS Orientation Training

By Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

NRCS held an introduction for new employees and student interns at Blacklick Metro Park on June 26. Participants were greeted via videotape by NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Brown. DSWC Chief David Hanselmann spoke on the Vision for the Division of Soil and Water Conservation. Nineteen speakers from three agencies provided their experiences in conservation. Agencies included the NRCS, DSWC, and FSA.



NRCS Student Interns

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider



New NRCS Employees

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider

Participants gave the training favorable reviews and said they learned much from the session. Andrew Hofner said, "The session today was good. I learned a lot and liked the soil scientist part." Erica Martin said, "It was great to get different job descriptions. We really needed that." Rhoshawnda Smith said that the session was a good one and that she enjoyed participating. Clinton Finney gave a good review too. He said, "The training was good today. I already had some background in NRCS, but it was good to get some more."

Among several morning topics covered were: Conservation Partnerships Today; History of Conservation Partnerships in Ohio; FSA's Working Partnership with NRCS; State Office Role in Supporting the Field; Career Opportunities with NRCS; Mentor Program; and Human Resources, including education requirements, insurance, and the code of conduct. The afternoon topic was The Field Experience. Six speakers with different jobs each gave their perspective on conservation field work.

Much thanks to the Ohio Mentor Committee for organizing and producing the NRCS Orientation Training. Committee members include Randy Jordan, Dianne Johnson, Dave Parker, Kim Ray, Dot Riley, Dee Sellitto, and John Williams.



NRCS Employees Who Made the Day a Success

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider

Student Intern Profiles

By Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

Danielle Mack comes to Ohio from New Orleans. She is a first semester junior at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she has a double major in Agricultural Economics and Soil Science. Danielle has previous experience working in an NRCS field office in Kansas, where she worked in Rangeland Management.

Danielle has a broad spectrum of interests. She said, "I'm one of those people, who in my heart, I want to be everything. I wanted to go into the CIA. I wanted to teach. I wanted to be a firefighter and to go into law enforcement. I wanted to be a corporate lawyer in high school. Then I worked in a garden center at a Home Depot and liked working with plants, so I decided to pick up Soil Science too."



Student Interns Danielle Mack and Darris Echols

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider

Danielle first learned about job opportunities with NRCS in Ohio, when Randy Jordan (SEASTC) visited her college. This summer, Danielle is working in Delaware and Union Counties. She is gaining more field experience, working on EQIP plans.

When asked what her current career goals are she said, "My whole thing is options. I like keeping my options open. I might work with NRCS or NFC or be the Secretary of Agriculture."

Student Trainee, Soil Conservationist, Darris Echols is working in the London Field Office this summer. Darris is a Forestry major entering his junior year at Alcorn State University in Mississippi. Last summer, Darris worked with the U.S. Forest Service at the Rocky Mountain Research Station near Ogden, Utah. He conducted research and collected data on trees and vegetation.

When asked about his career goals, Darris said, "I really don't know. There are so many things that I can do. I wanted to be a game warden and a city firefighter and a park ranger. This is a great opportunity here."

Darris said that he first heard about job opportunities with NRCS in Ohio when he spoke with two of Ohio's ASTCs for Field Operations. He said, "I had a talk with John Wilson and Randy Jordan. They came down to the school and talked with me." Darris mentioned that John Wilson, NWASTC, and Charles Loggins, NRCS Soil Conservationist, both attended Alcorn State University too. Darris is staying with Charles Loggins at his home this summer.

Michael Whitt is an Animal Science Major entering his junior year at Morehead State University. Michael grew up in Morehead, Kentucky, where he first heard about NRCS job opportunities from his former high school Agriculture teacher. This summer,



Student Intern Michael Whitt

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider

Michael is assigned to Gallia and Meigs Counties working on EQIP, doing followup on old plans, and filling out new applications.

He said, "My ultimate career goal is to be a farmer, but I want to see where this job leads me." Michael raises tobacco and has three acres of burley planted this season.

Elizabeth Endres is entering her senior year at Bowling Green where she majors in Environmental Science and Biology. Last summer, she was an Earth Team volunteer in Tuscarawas County. She did a lot of artwork for the district and designed their logo, in addition to working on their fair booth. This summer Elizabeth is working in the New Philadelphia Field Office, which is also her hometown.

She described her job this summer. "I am plotting and surveying to determine the amount of sedimentation in Wolf Lake. I am also surveying land for manure pits and working on EQIP. I have done water sampling at the Huff Run Watershed Project. We are looking at acid mine drainage and sending samples to ODNR."

When asked about her career goals, Elizabeth said, “I was interested in Wildlife Management, but I want to see how I like being a Soil Conservationist. I am interested in working with Native American tribes and in Wildlife Management and in Technical Engineering.”

Crop Science major Andrew Hofner is a junior at Ohio State University. He is working at the Bowling Green Field Office in Wood County. Andrew learned about this summer employment opportunity from his former FFA advisor who e-mailed him about the job.

Andrew said, “This summer I’m learning about the Farm Bill and working on wetland determinations. I’d like to stay with NRCS and see where it takes me—hopefully outside of Ohio.”

Ohio State University junior Clinton Finney is an Environmental Science major with a lot of work experience. He worked for the Columbiana County SWCD during the last two summers. He is currently working in Harrison County and serves Jefferson County too.



Student Interns Andrew Hofner, Elizabeth Endres, and Clinton Finney

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider

Clinton said, “Right now, I’m working on EQIP contracts and will be working on CNMPs. Because of my previous experience, I am able to hit the ground running and do a wide range of things. I would like to continue working with NRCS. I’ve worked with them since I was a little boy on the farm. I’d like to farm too.”

Clinton grew up on a hog and beef farm. His parents won the Ohio Conservation Farm Family of the Year Award for the year 2000.

Soil Conservationist, Student Trainee Rhoshawnda Smith is a junior at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. She is majoring in Agricultural Economics. She heard about this job from her Agricultural Advisor at her school and says that she is enjoying her first experience working with NRCS in the Zanesville Field Office.

Rhoshawnda said, “We’ve been doing some EQIP. We go out to the field sometimes to deal with waste management. We mostly go out to different farms for conservation planning. I have seen a lot of wetland wildlife habitat.” Regarding her career aspirations, she said, “Right now, I’m really not sure, but I’m looking into being a Soil Conservationist. I’m going to check it out this summer.”

Erica Martin is a Soil Conservationist, Student Trainee in the Zanesville Field Office. Erica is entering her senior year as an Agricultural Economics major at Alcorn State in Lorman, Mississippi. She described the work she is doing this summer.



Student Interns Rhoshawnda Smith and Erica Martin

Photo By Jeff Raifsnider

Erica said, “I’m doing surveying, working on EQIP, and entering data into the computer for EQIP plans.”

Several of Erica’s friends told her that they enjoyed their jobs as interns in North Carolina and South Carolina. When the USDA liaison officer at her university told her that Randy Jordan and John Wilson were coming to visit her school, she made arrangements to interview with them.

She said, “I do want to work for NRCS, but I am looking at different jobs.”

Defiance and Williams Joint Watershed Management Flood Control Project #95-10

By Jeff Ankney, Defiance SWCD

One of the most unique and environmentally sensitive flood control projects ever undertaken in Ohio was done under the Conservation Works of Improvement through the Defiance and Williams Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The joint board of supervisors hired the outside consulting firm of Finkbeiner, Pettis and Strout, Inc., Consulting Engineers from Toledo, to design and engineer the project and gave the firm guidelines to reduce flooding in Bryan and rural parts of Williams and Defiance Counties. The \$4.5 million Defiance – Williams Joint Watershed Management Flood Control Project will help reduce flooding and stabilize stream channels by eliminating logjams and clearing debris, such as fallen trees and brush. In the past, these clogged streams have caused flooding of cultivated farm fields and Bryan streets, homes, and businesses.

The combined watersheds of Lick Creek and Prairie Creek / Drout Creek are targets of the project, which will be partially funded by a \$2.35 million State grant gained through hard work of State Legislators Lynn Watchmann and Steve Buehrer. Rather than following the traditional practice of stripping all the vegetation from the creek banks, plans are to simply unclog the stream to promote a natural free flow of water, which will eventually drain into the Tiffin River. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) may also be employed to protect some sections of the streams.



Streambank restoration with tree revetment

Photo submitted by Jeff Ankney

Farmers will be urged, and paid, to leave creek side buffer strips uncultivated, but planted in grasses or trees. Such buffers filter cropland runoff to reduce stream pollution by chemical fertilizer. The free flowing stream will also be opened for recreational activities such as canoeing and fishing.

During storm events, part of the storm water will flow from Prairie Creek into a 43-acre wetland basin that will be created from a farm field on the south edge of Bryan. The wetlands, with a pond and marsh, will become a wildlife park with a walkway and observation decks. The basin will hold overflow from the creek when water rises during rainstorms. Water will then gradually be released back into the stream.

The 43-acre, 66-million gallon pond will be a permanent part of the wetlands acreage, thereby

serving as a home to waterfowl and other wildlife. The wetland will also reduce the velocity of downstream flood flows that contribute to stream channel erosion.

Initially, the Williams County commissioners considered clearing the stream only from the City of Bryan to the Defiance County line. However, the joint board was formed once it was determined that clearing the streams only to the county line would result in increased problems downstream in Defiance County. The plan then became a two-county project involving 68,000 acres of watershed. The project, which is scheduled for completion in summer 2002, was initially detailed in a report by FPS prepared for the joint board. The report addressed problems along 18.5 miles of Drout, Prairie, and Lick Creeks.

Penney Nature Center

By Jeff Ankney, Defiance SWCD

The Defiance Soil and Water Conservation District is happy to accept approximately 78 acres of land that was donated by Mrs. Nancy Jo Penney in memory of her late father, Milton Penney. The land is located in Section 9 of Noble Township, Defiance County, Ohio, between State Route 15 and Ashpacher Road. It will be used to develop a nature center to educate the public on conservation and natural resources.

The Defiance SWCD education program will initially focus on installing conservation practices such as wetlands, windbreaks,

food plots, and bird blinds. Eventually, field trips will be held where students, educators, and local community groups can experience hands-on activities on a variety of environmental topics.

The Defiance SWCD's education program will soon have a place to

invite educators and students to perform water quality monitoring, tree identification, soils identification, wildlife management, agriculture practices, and to get a better understanding of conservation and stewardship of natural resources.



Penney Nature Center

Photo submitted by Jeff Ankney

Farmland Protection Program

by Julia Hinders, NRCS

Since 1996, the State of Ohio has steadily progressed toward implementing a voluntary farmland protection program. Ohio's ability to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmland Protection Program (FPP) in 2002 represents the dedicated effort of public and private entities, the leadership of Ohio's legislature, and the financial commitment of Ohio's citizens to protect the State's agricultural viability.

The Farmland Protection Program helps protect prime farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses. The Farm Bill reauthorizes this program and extends it to non-governmental organizations, as

well as States, tribes, and local governments, to purchase conservation easements. It also expands the program to protecting farms and ranches that contain historical and archaeological sites. A request for proposals for \$50 million in funding was published in the Federal Register on May 30 and can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmland/2002/PubNotc.html>.

The FPP is designed to provide matching funds to State, tribal, or local governmental entities or NGOs that have farmland protection programs to acquire conservation easements or other interests

in land, which prohibit farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses.

With the strong and active collaboration between public agencies and private stakeholders during the development of the State's farmland preservation program, Ohio is solidly poised to advance USDA's mission to protect the nation's most threatened and productive agricultural land. For more information about the Farmland Protection Program, contact Paul DeArman at 614-255-2461 or Julia Hinders at 614-255-2477.

Food, Land, and People Project

By John Niedzialek, NRCS

The Western Reserve RC&D Council teamed up with Lake Metroparks to sponsor a facilitator's workshop for the Food, Land, and People (FLP) Program. FLP is an educational program to promote agricultural production and food nutrition awareness to students K-12. The Western Reserve RC&D has adopted this project in an effort to expose teachers and students to the importance of agriculture in our area. "Where our food comes from" is highlighted in a series of 55 lessons available in the program.

John Davis, Volunteer State Coordinator for FLP, was the presenter for our workshop at Lake Farmpark. Sixteen attendees from 10 counties became trained facilitators at the workshop. These trained facilitators can now train teachers in their respective areas in bringing these lessons into the classroom. FLP has noted a general lack of awareness of children regarding agricultural production and food nutrition. The goal of this program is to help students learn how to make informed choices as consumers and future policy makers. This is especially important in our urban areas. Some States such as Pennsylvania have made FLP a mandatory part of their curriculum. In Ohio, the program is taught on a voluntary basis.

The council would like to sponsor more workshops in the future and seek sources of funding to help facilitators buy supplies and put on workshops of their own. Check out the FLP website at www.foodlandpeople.org.

Buckeye Hills RC&D

by Bob First, NRCS

The Buckeye Hills RC&D will be administering a statewide rural fire protection project over the next two years. A \$283,000 grant has been approved from the U.S. Forest Service that will enable the nine RC&D areas in Ohio to work at the local level to install dry fire hydrants in all 88 counties. Other components of the project include purchasing LCD projection systems for each RC&D to use in presenting information to local groups on the importance of hazard mitigation and dry hydrant installation. Also, GIS based maps showing location of both existing and new hydrants will be developed for the local fire departments. The goal is to install 360 dry fire hydrants in the 2-year period. For further information on the project, contact your RC&D coordinator.

Buckeye Hills RC&D has been working with Warren Township, Washington County, to develop a park project for township residents. A series of public meetings were held to get input for the type of improvements the citizens would like to see. A walking trail, picnic shelter, playground equipment, and access for fishing were the top requests. A \$10,000 grant was submitted and approved from the Sister's of St. Joseph Charitable Fund in Parkersburg, WV. Local donations from several families were also received. The project is now underway for construction of the walking trail, parking area, and shelters.

Buckeye Hills RC&D is planning a conference for later this year entitled "Rural Community and

Land Use Planning for Southeast Ohio." The conference is set for Friday, November 1, 2002, at the Ohio University Inn in Athens. The focus of this conference is to provide information to local elected officials, planners, groups, and individuals about the need for planning for change instead of reacting to change. As development and pressure on land use continues to increase, elected officials are struggling with the need to make correct and timely decisions. This conference will provide basic information on developing planning strategies to help them do their jobs better. Larry Long, Executive Director of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, will be a keynote speaker for the day.

Buckeye Hills RC&D is providing assistance to Perry SWCD to prepare an "Agricultural Land Use Report." This effort will look at past, current, and future land use trends in Perry County. A committee of 10-12 people has been meeting monthly to gather information and to begin the process of writing the report. The group has developed a one-page survey that will be used at focus meetings at the township level, sent out with the district newsletter, and distributed at other times such as the county fair and annual meeting. We hope to complete this project by year's end.

Splash Bash 2002

By Bryan Miller, Hancock SWCD

The first Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District Splash Bash was held at Findlay's Riverside Park on May 21. Over 500 fourth grade students from Findlay City and Hancock County Schools attended the day-long event. There were 22 different stations for students to visit and learn about water and nonpoint source pollution's effect on their environment. Stations had a variety of activities. Some students had a chance to



experience cleaning oily feathers to demonstrate oil spill clean up efforts, while others had a chance to view wet animals including an alligator from the zoo. Others had a chance to visit the fire department's pumper truck and learn about pressurized water systems and how fireman apply mathematics in fighting fires. Each student then got a chance to spray the fire hose and feel the amount of force generated.

Presenters included the Toledo Zoo, Findlay Fire Department,

Ohio EPA, Master Gardeners of Hancock County, local high school volunteers, University of Findlay students, SWCD personnel, and many more.

The event was funded by a grant from the Community Foundation and donations from Findlay's Wal-Mart, Fifth Third Bank, Dietsch Brothers Ice Cream, and the Hancock SWCD. All teachers that attended received a tote bag full of educational books, cd-rom, magazines, and a poster.



Getting Wet

By Bryan Miller, Hancock SWCD

Almost two hundred local Fifth graders from Findlay City Schools have been taking part this spring in the Hancock SWCD Stream Monitoring Program. Students from Lincoln and Chamberlain Hill Schools spent part of their school day learning about and exploring aquatic habitats while literally getting wet!

Students learned how to collect macroinvertebrates (species with-

out a backbone) using kick seining nets, identified and classified organisms they found, performed simple tests such as Dissolved Oxygen, Turbidity, pH, Ammonia, Phosphate, and chlorine while also taking depth and temperature readings in both the Blanchard River and Eagle Creek.

The students and teachers truly enjoyed their experience and had a fantastic time getting wet and

dirty while being scientists for a day. Bryan Miller, SWCD Education Coordinator, and three University of Findlay student volunteers conducted each program. Bryan and his volunteers have become known as "The River Rats" identifiable by their neon green shirts they wear and the cool river rat logo that was designed and printed on their t-shirts.

Local Personnel Prepare for Tree Planting Season

By Bridget Early, Freelance Writer (for Logan SWCD)

Logan County –Tree planting season is here and preparation was at an all-time high Thursday, April 11, when agency representatives attended a tree planting workshop at Camp Wesley north of Bellefontaine.

Personnel from soil and water conservation districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ohio State University Extension, and other agencies participated in the workshop where they learned about the tree planting process, soil site evaluations, site preparation, and weed control and how to handle seedlings for repackaging. Kathy Smith, OSU Extension; Jim Brown, OSU faculty emeritus; Randy Heiligmann, OSU Extension; and Tom Berger, ODNR, Division of Forestry led informal group discussions and presented information detailing soil characteristics and species adaptability for Logan County and the State of Ohio.

Speakers addressed the various reasons landowners are interested in planting trees including windbreaks, aesthetics, wildlife habitat, commercial production, and erosion control. Smith discussed the virtues of direct seeding, bare root seedlings, container grown species, ball and burlap, and cuttings in relation to growth and survival rate, indicating that some landowners expect rapid growth of tree species. “We humans just don’t wait for things to grow,” Smith said.

Each participant received instruction for using a tree-planting machine in addition to hand planting trees in a hands-on workshop. A tree-planting machine allows three workers to plant up to 4,000 trees per day by hand, according to Smith. The advantage to hand planting trees is that the landowner can plant earlier.

While Logan County and many other counties in the State have been soil mapped, Brown suggests that each site be soil tested before tree species are selected because a wide range of soil types and conditions can be found within one field. In field demonstrations, the speakers indicated the variety of conditions at the Camp Wesley site and related the various conditions to the success rate of previous plantings.

Landowners will have the best results with tree plantings if they plan ahead, according to workshop speakers. Plans for tree planting should be made in the fall prior to tree planting to allow for site preparation and weed control. Landowners should also be aware of maintenance requirements and budget time to care for new plantings, according to speakers. Tree planting season in Ohio is from April 1 to May 1 for best results. Trees planted later in the season have a lower survival rate and may not survive at all. For more information about tree planting, contact Logan Soil and Water Conservation District at 937-593-2946 or OSU Extension at 937-599-4227.



NRCS-Ohio Employment Activity Report (FY-2002)

New Hires/Transfer to Ohio:

Jay McElroy, GS-5, Soil Conservationist, Orwell FO, 10/21/01
James Reisen, GS-11, IT Specialist, Xenia FO, 11/04/01
Kimberly Farr, GS-11, District Conservationist, Springfield FO, 11/18/01
Clark Harshbarger, GS-5, Soil Scientist, Marietta FO, 3/24/02
Mary Ardrey, GS-4, Office Automation Assistant, State Office, 3/24/02
Toya Yates, GS-5, Cartographic Technician, Newark FO, 4/21/02
Jane Bachtel, GS-9, Soil Conservationist, Wooster FO, 5/19/02
John Lafferty, GS-7, Civil Engineering Technician, Lebanon FO, 6/16/02
Jenelle Ott, GS-7, Soil Conservationist, Greenville FO, 6/16/02
Gretta Luedeke, GS-11, Cartographer, OSU, 7/14/02
Jennifer Cipliver, GS-7, Grazing Lands Specialist, Chillicothe FO, 6/30/02
Jimmie Rose, GS-5, Civil Engineering Technician, Gallipolis FO, 6/30/02
Christopher Copley, GS-9, Civil Engineering Technician, State Office, 7/14/02

Temporary Appointment

(Not-to-exceed 2-years, USDA Career Intern Program)

Julia Hinders, GS-9, Natural Resources Specialist, State Office, 6/30/02
Kevin Swope, GS-7, Civil Engineering Technician, Canton FO, 8/11/02

Promotions

Michael Hammitt, GS-9, Civil Engineering Technician, State Office, promoted to GS-10, 10/21/01
Tomika Walker, GS-11, Outreach Coordinator, State Office, promoted to GS-12, 12/30/01
Jeffrey Glanville, GS-11, Soil Scientist, Findlay FO, promoted to Soil Database Manager, GS-12, State Office, 7/28/02
Ronald Nieman, GS-7, Soil Conservationist, Norwalk FO, promoted to GS-9, Soil Conservationist, Norwalk FO, 7/28/02

Reassignments

Alberta Owensby, GS-6, Personnel Assistant, State Office, reassigned to GS-6, Human Resources Assistant, State Office, 10/21/01
Moir Sanford, GS-12, Budget Officer, State Office, reassigned to GS-12, Budget Analyst, State Office, 11/4/01
Stephen Hibinger, GS-11, District Conservationist, Cambridge FO, reassigned to GS-11, Grassland Conservationist, Zanesville FO, 3/24/02
Rebecca Lowry, GS-4, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist), Circleville FO, reassigned to GS-4, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist), Mt. Vernon FO, 6/16/02
Vitchy Vue, GS-4, Student Trainee (Engineering), Wooster FO, reassigned to GS-4, Student Trainee (Engineering), Medina FO, 6/30/02
Dennis DeWeese, GS-12, Management Analyst, State Office, reassigned to GS-12, RC&D Coordinator, Delaware FO, 7/28/02
Mark Scarpitti, GS-12, Lead District Conservationist, Lancaster FO, reassigned to GS-12, Resource Conservationist, Chillicothe FO, 7/28/02
Denise Shafer, GS-8, Civil Engineering Technician, Mt. Gilead FO, reassigned to GS-7, Soil Conservationist, Delaware FO, 7/14/02
Melody Dickinson, GS-11, Computer Specialist, Lancaster FO, reassigned to GS-11, Information Technology Specialist, Zanesville FO, 8/25/02
Gary Luttner, GS-11, Computer Specialist, Medina FO, reassigned to GS-11, Information Technology Specialist, Medina FO, 8/11/02
Joseph Cucuzza, GS-11, Computer Specialist, Findlay FO, reassigned to GS-11, Information Technology Specialist, Findlay FO, 8/11/02
Judy Hill, GS-12, Computer Specialist, State Office, reassigned to GS-12, Information Technology Specialist, State Office, 8/11/02
Larry Porter, GS-12, Computer Specialist, State Office, reassigned to GS-12, Information Technology Specialist, State Office, 8/11/02

Change in Duty Station

James Wade, GS-12, Geologist, Delaware FO, changed to GS-12, Geologist, State Office, 2/10/02

Resignation

Sparkle Harris, GS-4, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist), Xenia FO, 8/10/02
Andrew Ety, GS-11, Civil Engineer, State Office, 8/23/02

Retirements

Robert Laborie, GS-8, Civil Engineering Technician,
Elyria FO, 2/1/02

Charles McGuire, GS-8, Civil Engineering Technician,
State Office, 3/1/02

Shirley Ooley, GS-9, Soil Scientist, Marietta FO,
5/3/02

Virgil E. Campbell, GS-11, District Conservationist,
Georgetown FO, 8/2/02

Leave Without Pay-Not to Exceed

Darris Echols, GS-3, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist),
London FO, 8/9/02

Landry Roe, GS-3, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist),
Hillsboro FO, 8/9/02



This usually nocturnal possum carries
seven offspring to safety
Photo By Jack Clayton (husband of Barbara)



The awesome possum lets nothing get in
its way.
Photo By Jack Clayton (husband of Barbara)